



**RICHARD SHUMSKY**  
Chief Probation Officer

## **COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT**

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(562) 940-2501



February 10, 2003

**TO:** Each Supervisor

**FROM:** Richard Shumsky *RS*  
Chief Probation Officer

**SUBJECT: ESCAPE AND SUBSEQUENT APPREHENSION  
OF MINORS DURING TRANSIT**

On February 6, 2002, at approximately 1:50 PM, two detained minors escaped while being returned from the Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center (KJJJC) to Los Padornos Juvenile Hall (LPJH). This document summarizes the method of escape based on the description of events provided by minors and Probation staff riding in the van. Also included are the actions taken by the Probation Department to prevent a recurrence of such an event.

### **METHOD OF ESCAPE**

The vehicle involved in the incident is a fifteen passenger van driven by a Transportation Deputy (TD), with another TD sitting in the passenger seat. Nine minors were riding in the van. Each minor was reportedly handcuffed or similarly restrained at KJJJC prior to entering the van. The van is affixed with interior security screens over the windows, and screens separating the minors from the TDs. The security screens are generally pop-riveted into the interior plastic surfaces of the van.

One of the escapees, minor Jarvas T., admitted to having a handcuff key in his possession. The presence of the key was confirmed by other minors who were riding in the van. We continue to investigate how Jarvas T. obtained a handcuff key. Prior to departure from KJJJC, minor Jarvas T. removed his handcuffs and attempted to run out of the court, but was stopped by Probation staff. Following this incident the minor was placed in waist restraints, which include a chain wrapping around his waist and his hands cuffed to the chain at his sides approximately at the point of his hips.

Jarvas T. was seated at the end of the third of four passenger rows of the van. While riding in the van Jarvas T. used the handcuff key to remove his waist restraint. Jarvas T. then used an open cuff of the waist chain to dislodge some of the rivets holding the

security screen in place. The TD's had the van's AM/FM radio on, thus partially concealing the sound of minor Jarvas T.'s activity in the back of the van.

At about 1:50 PM, as the van was waiting behind several cars in the left turn lane on eastbound Imperial Highway at Old River School Road in the City of Downey, minor Jarvas T. began pulling on the security screen until he had access to the right-rear van window. This window is approximately six feet in length. Upon noticing Jarvas T. tugging on the security screen, the van driver exited the left turn lane, cutting across three traffic lanes to the right. The driver was intent on reaching the nearby Downey Court where he thought law enforcement would be available to assist.

During this process minor Jarvas T. began kicking the window glass. He subsequently struck the window glass with the waist chain and broke the glass. While the van was still in motion, minor Jarvas T. exited the van by way of the broken window and fell to the pavement. At this point the van was heading up the ramp that leads from eastbound Imperial Highway directly to the Downey Court parking lot. The van drove over Jarvas T.'s left hand. The driver stopped the van in the court parking lot. Minor Jarvas T. fled westbound towards a residential neighborhood. The accompanying TD chased Jarvas T. but was unable to maintain visual contact.

As Jarvas T. was being chased, minor Omar P. also exited out the van window and fled. Omar P. had been wearing handcuffs affixed in front, which were no longer in place as he exited the van. Omar P. admitted that during transit minor Jarvas T. had passed the handcuff key over the seat to him, and that he gave the key back to Jarvas T. after he had removed the handcuffs. Omar P. was seated in the second passenger row, between two other minors, directly in front of Jarvas T.

### **APPREHENSION**

The driver radioed the Probation dispatcher, who then called Downey police and LPJH. Downey police responded, as did at least thirty LPJH staff who were coming on shift at 2:00 PM. The dispatcher instructed the TD's to return to LPJH with the seven remaining minors.

LPJH staff assembled a profile of each minor, including photos and relevant physical characteristics, for distribution to law enforcement. At approximately 2:25 PM Probation's Special Enforcement Units (SEU) were notified. LPJH staff were directed to provide surveillance in the neighborhoods it was believed the minors would likely go. Contact was also made with family members and known associates of the minors.

At approximately 7:00 PM, two Probation SEU officers conducting surveillance believed they may have seen minor Jarvas T. They continued to follow the minor, apprehending him at a residence. Jarvas T. was returned by SEU officers to LPJH at approximately 7:30 PM, where he was seen by medical staff who referred him to LAC+USC Medical Center for treatment of a broken left hand resulting from the transportation van running over it. Jarvas T. was transported by LPJH staff to LAC-USC at approximately 8:30 PM where he remains as of this writing pending surgery to his hand.

At approximately 8:30 PM, Probation SEU officers received information from the community that minor Omar P. had been seen. SEU officers continued surveillance at several locations, and apprehended minor Omar P. outside a residence at approximately 9:30 PM. Omar P. was returned to LPJH where he was seen by medical staff for a bruised knee and cuts to his knee and hands caused by the broken van window glass.

### **SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS**

The Probation Department is immediately implementing the following enhancements to security:

- Leg shackles will be used for every minor transported out of a juvenile hall or camp except when medical concerns preclude their use. This process will initiate with juvenile hall minors, and expand to camp minors as more shackles are obtained. The Department has contacted several vendors and the Sheriff to obtain additional equipment.
- Each TD and a supervisor involved in transport of a minor will individually confirm that all minors are appropriately handcuffed and shackled.
- Effective immediately dress codes for TDs restrict clothing that would hinder attempts to pursue or restrain minors.
- Broadcast radio will not be used in vehicles while transporting minors except to check traffic reports and during emergency situations.

The following security enhancements are being implemented as soon as applicable equipment can be deployed:

- Bars or other heavier duty security devices will be added to all vans used to transport detained youths, and will be secured to metal surfaces of the vehicles.
- We will determine the efficacy of additional mirrors above van windshields to aid TD's view of passengers.

**Each Supervisor**  
**February 10, 2003**  
**Page 4 of 4**

- We will review the safety and legal issues pertinent to turning the front passenger seat in vans around so the accompanying TD can maintain a constant view of minors.
- Pepper spray will be mandated for TDs. Some transportation staff already carry pepper spray, and all will carry it as soon as they complete required pepper spray training.

If you have questions or need additional information, please let me know or call Robert Smythe of my staff at (562) 940-2503.

**C: Honorable Michael Nash, Presiding Judge, Children's Court**  
**David Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer**

**RS:rgs**  
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